

The SL Arts and Life Magazine

reZ

OCTOBER 2011 HAPPY HALLOWEEN

A **PASSION**
for **Tango**

**Why SL will
Never be FB**

Cat
Questionnaire:
Gracie Kendal


ART
and
Aesthetics

Meeroos: WTF?

POETRY

more...





Editor's Note

You have the floor

Deningun Parte: Editor

Dear Readers,

First let me draw your attention to our new Letters to the Editor section, which we will start in the November issue. We would love to read and publish your comments. We will cap letters at 500 words and shorten them as necessary, and of course we will only publish things we would say in polite company. Other than that though, you have the floor! To send a letter to the editor, please email me: deningunparte@gmail.com.

For this issue, we feature Tango in Second Life, a venue dedicated to Argentine tango. In preparing for this article, I indulged and spent more than a few hours dancing and talking with the owner, Adolph Gustafson. Yes, I am a hedonist, but I will say that Cat Boccaccio, who put a lot of effort into the photo shoot, put me up to it.

We also have Consuela Caldwell join us as a writer. Consuela is an accomplished artist, with many exhibits to her credit. In her inaugural article, she considers the differences between abstract and representational art, and explains what a viewer might find in either type of work.

The final art-related piece this month is Cat Boccaccio's 14 leading questions, which she put to the woman behind the 1000 Avatars Project, Gracie Kendall.

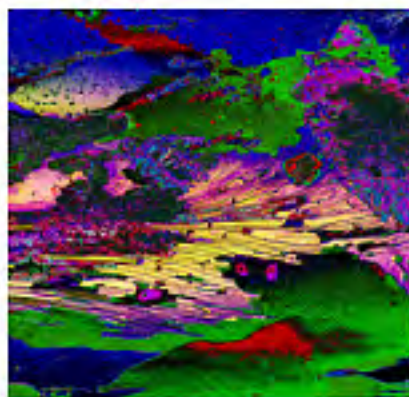
As usual, we have opinions about lots of things. Jullianna Juliesse considers the breeding of virtual animals and virtual pregnancies in her rant, *The Urge To Merge*. Rodolfo Teardrop takes Linden Lab to task for its efforts to make SL more appealing to computer illiterate masses, and I strike a related note in my Plan B column, where I reflect on how immersionists use the possibilities of Second Life.

And finally, we found two poems for you: *In Praise of Angry Women*, by Karli Daviau, and *Orchid*, by our own Jullianna Juliesse.

Enjoy!

Deningun Parte

Editor in Chief



El Tango

The Tango



de Mañana (y Ayer) ***of Tomorrow (and Yesterday)***

What would Second Life be without dancing? At times, it can seem dancing is all we ever do. We choose our style of music, a venue; we find a partner, we dress for it, and off we go to seemingly endless pleasure. I doubt anyone in SL is untouched by the temptation of dancing a night away. And regardless of where you go, you will almost always find a tango animation in your dance ball. That is to be expected, because tango is a widely taught dance in RL, and so we dance tango to almost any kind of music.

But, are we missing a point here? Tango is not merely a convenient sequence of dance steps or a pleasant animation. Tango has a long, storied history; it conquered the world when the world was young and pushed the limits of societal

By Deningun Parte

conventions. It has even deeper roots in its ancestral home, Argentina. When I give you this description of a vibrant dance, you might wonder where the lively tango scene is in Second Life. After all, we have ballrooms, speakeasies, and rock clubs, each dedicated to its slice of culture, music and dance. But tango? You draw a blank.

This July, SL resident Adolph Gustafson started his venue, *Tango in Second Life*, in an attempt to fill this apparent gap. Adolph lives and breathes, eats and sleeps tango, and talking with him is feeling the passion he has for the music and dance. With minimal prompting, he will speak about the origins of the tango, when his home of Buenos Aires consisted mainly of unpaved streets and people got around in horse-drawn carriages, and when immigrants arrived from Africa and various parts of Europe to form an ethnic melting pot. From this interaction between cultures, in the late 19th century, the tango was born.

At first, tangos consisted solely of instrumental music, meant as an accompaniment for dances, but soon voice was added and, carried by travelling Argentine dancers and orchestras, tango started to spread throughout the world.

In Argentina, the early 20th century saw the rise to fame of an iconic tango singer named Carlos Gardel. He is revered by Argentines to this day, and although he died in an aircraft accident in 1941, he is still considered the gold standard against whom all other tango musicians are measured. Or, as the Argentines say, "Gardel sings better every day." This is not to say tango has not known great instrumentalists and band leaders, the best known of which is *bandoneon* (a musical instrument similar to the concertina) virtuoso Astor Piazzolla. But ask the connoisseurs who was the best player, and you are likely to start a war—or so Adolph tells me. He adds that his personal favorite is Anibal Troilo, rather than Piazzolla, and leaves me scurrying to brush up on my tango education.



The dance traditionally has strong and very clearly defined gender roles. The man

***He created a venue as it
might have existed in
Buenos Aires in the
early 20th century***



leads; the woman follows and displays her beauty in doing so. And both traditionally fulfill the roles to such an extent and with such passion that dancing tango was once considered risqué in Europe. It makes me smile to think that at one time, Prussian military officers were forbidden from dancing tango, to protect the reputation of the military. I imagine they did it anyway.

Adolfh sees the history of tango as a perfect circle. Once upon a time, people from all over the world arrived in Buenos Aires and the tango was born. And soon they spread it all over the world, where it has lived ever since. Today tango is considered an Immaterial World Heritage by UNESCO, and in that sense, it is owned by the entire world.

In Second Life, Adolfh has taken great care to create the venue as it might have existed in Buenos Aires in the early 20th century. He made sure to get the architectural details right, from the polished wood floor to period-correct lamps. He searched long and hard for high-quality animations that portray the beauty and intensity of the dance, and he created his own stream of classic Argentine tangos, which is hypnotic to just listen to on its own.

But as we venture out on the dance floor after our long conversation about tango origins, history, and cultural significance, to dance in silence, my perspective changes. We interlock legs, we take seemingly impossible steps, I swing high in the air. Who cares about names and dates? We are lost in the dance. And all I can think of is that I want more of this.



*Visit Adolph's **Tango in Second Life**:*
<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Clyde/114/224/27>



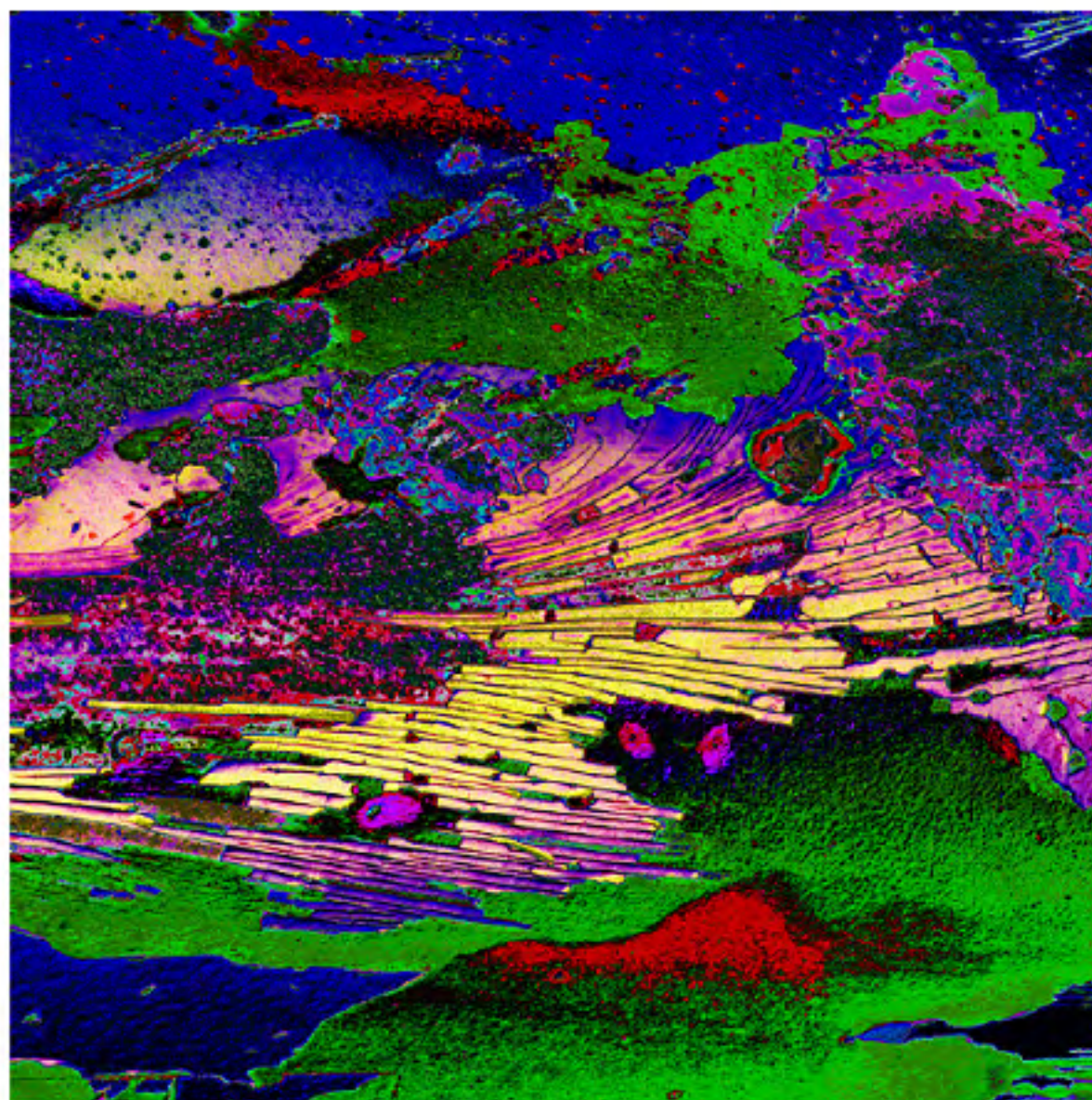
Every woman deserves to be BEAUTIFUL!
 Vintage Fashion of the 1920's, 30's & 40's at
 Bella tu~Beautiful You.

"My fashion will make you look divine to affordable prices"
 Nurielle Damiano / owner of Bella tu~Beautiful You
 Shops in : Paris Eiffel, New Toulouse (shotgun row), The roaring
 1920 Chicago, Berlin-Scheunenviertel, NEW Outlet at Las Rocas

Art & Aesthetic

By Consuela Caldwell

Branford Marsalis was lying in a hammock with his saxophone cradled in his armpit the night before his opening concert with the rock musician Sting. A reporter asked him, "Aren't you nervous about your debut in Sting's band?" Branford smiled and gave a reply, "No, of course not, I'm a jazz musician; I already know what it's like for nobody to like my music." As an abstract artist, I have similar feelings. Even though I get praise from a lot of other artists and a lot of accolades from other people, I'm still faced with the reality that most people have very little appreciation for abstract art. Most people want to see an image of something like a landscape, a portrait, a still life, or even dogs playing poker



*Art by
Consuela
Caldwell*

painted on velvet. This art is more representational in nature and more accessible to the masses.

Why is it that so many people don't like abstract art? I'm an artist with a degree in psychology, and I've had plenty of years to come up with my own theories. The first year I owned my camera, I seemed to develop an ability to learn a lot about people by the way they responded to my abstract photographs. They were like Rorschach tests that gave me a peek into their heads to see how they experienced the world.

The process of appreciating art that's abstract is different than the process of appreciating art that is representational. What representational art has and what most people who view

it like, is that it has a ready-made narrative of some kind. That is, there are recognizable and definable things that can be seen as telling a tangible story or idea. The representations are unambiguous. Very little is left up to interpretation as to what it is. From this narrative, the viewer can form opinions, project emotions and meaning onto people and objects in the picture. For instance, Renoir's painting, "Luncheon of the Boating Party," has an image of people on a patio sitting at tables engaging each other in conversation. The painting does all the work for the viewer in telling you in the title who and where, and the image showing it happen. It's a beautiful painting with a dream-like feel that transports the viewer to a specific time and

place. The initial sight of this image starts a process that triggers interpretations and meanings. From there the image can be used to jumpstart a narrative that's internal in origin. A person viewing this painting doesn't have to work or overtax their imagination to enjoy it. This is the appeal of representational art.

On the other hand, abstract art, especially abstract expressionism, has no built-in narrative. What you see is

Art & Aesthetic

an image portraying colors, forms and texture that have no intent on representing anything. In some of my abstract photography, I have images that can be recognized as a metal bolt, or a gear assembly that's part of a larger machine. But these objects stand alone out of context from the things they are a part of



*Renoir's
Luncheon of the
Boating Party*

and their setting. They are to be appreciated as they are.

Due to these qualities, those who like abstract art are people with a high tolerance for ambiguity. Those who dislike abstract art tend to have a low tolerance of things and ideas of an ambiguous nature. If their brains don't perceive a precise representation in which they can project meaning, then the process leading to enjoyment of art is shut down.

This is because they start in a place in their heads where they have a need for definite meanings and recognizable images that provide a narrative that is externally based. That is, one that is external to the viewer and has the artist as its source.

On the other hand, people who enjoy abstract art are able to tolerate ambiguity enough to focus on the overall composition of form, color and texture. Not being hung up on the need for external meanings and definitions, they are able to experience the art emotionally, both in their heads and in their bodies. These collections of emotions and sensations can trigger thoughts based on their own internal experience. This can be the beginning of a narrative of its own, one that is internally based in the person looking at the work of art. From there, certain ideas and images about what they are seeing may come up, making it possible to see forms in the work that remind them of real life things. The person is then

able to use all of this for a means of self exploration. The definitions and meanings have their origin from within the consciousness of the viewer. Just looking at abstract art becomes an active process that gives the viewer the opportunity to create their own narrative. The feelings and sensations they project onto an abstract piece are their own. The memories and meanings triggered by this process are more their own.

One person looking at an abstract piece could come up with totally different meanings and narratives than a person standing next to them viewing the same piece of art. Overall, it becomes a creative process where the imagination of the viewer is stimulated.

Art & Aesthetic

The abstract piece acts as a catalyst that does nothing more than trigger a response, while at the same time giving creative space to the viewer to use their own creativity. Who knows where this could lead? The possibilities are boundless and appeal to the viewers' own creative impulse. To me, this is the reason we have abstract art and why more people should be open to it.



SONATTAS MORALES

couture

The

ANY Key

"To start, press any key. Which one is the 'any' key?" --H. Simpson

Elderly Customer: I CAN'T GET ON THE FACEBOOK TO PLAY CITYVILLE!!

Me: Ok. Can you open up your web browser, please?

Elderly Customer: What's that? I'm not "computer literate".

Me: (suppressing a sigh): Can you get on the Internet?

Elderly Customer: I'm not *stupid*.

That is an actual verbatim call. At present, I have what some might call a "cushy job". I sit on my cushy, take phone calls from people who have no business owning computers and who need help unscrewing them up.

Since, if you're reading this, you managed to figure out how to install, run and use Second Life (even if, like me, you don't use half of what you could) I assume you're shaking your head in disbelief. "How," you are wondering, "do you get on Facebook without knowing

By Rodolpho Teardrop

what a web browser is?" I have no answers for you. I still have trouble with the fact that some people call the "Web", the "Internet"*. Or that they do not have even a basic understanding of the monkey on their back called the computer.

I promise I'm not using the graciously donated space just to bitch about work. Honest. No one likes to listen to someone talk about work. Unless, of course, you're



the one doing the talking. Which reminds me. I had this one guy...

Sorry.

Perhaps it's a little hyperbolic to say that the Lindens want to turn Second Life into a 3-D Facebook but that's what I hear. Let me come clean and say that I'm taking the word of people that say this is the case. I've heard tell of a "lite viewer" but can't really be bothered to track it down. The thought of what it would look like and what its use would be both amuses and repulses me. I see a handful of buttons that read "Naked/Clothed", "Buy" and "Cityville".

Two major issues stand in the way of making this transition even close to successful.

1. Grammy and Gramps Average are stupid. Go back and read the conversation that started this article. Let me add that a certain Office Supply Superstore offers a service where (and I'm not kidding) you can have a "personal technology expert" *TYPE THE PRODUCT KEY FOR AN INSTALL OF MICROSOFT OFFICE, AND CLICK "OK"*. And people pay for that. Money. And it's not just the elderly. I had someone

give me their email address as "user circle 'A' yahoo.com***. To expect that they'd be able to even install a lite version of SL let alone find the "Naked" button is like asking the Dalai Lama to star in A Clockwork Orange.

2. Customer: I CAN'T GET MY EMAIL!

Me: Ok. Can you get on the Internet, please?

Customer: NO! I CAN'T! I CAN'T GET ON ANYTHING!

Me: Ok. It sounds like your connection to the Internet is having problems. What we'll need to do is...

Customer: I'M NOT COMPUTER LITERATE AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT ANY OF THAT MEANS! CAN'T YOU JUST GET ME TO MY EMAIL?? **

It's not about the user experience any more

I'm not simply trying to pad this out by duplicating the idea of a computer-challenged public. It is really that critical a point to make. And, having been in the software industry before, I can pretty much promise you that no one ever stopped to consider this massively important piece of information.

Because it's not about the "user experience" anymore. It's not about making a product that people –any people– can and want to use. It's about increasing the amount of data gathered so they can sell it to the people that want it.

Does no one remember why the Emerald viewer got banned from the grid?***** My guess is that Emerald jumped the gun and got whacked because of it. And Emerald pretty much became Phoenix. So... apples not falling far from the tree.

The Lindens (and most software companies like Apple and Micro\$oft)

need to step back and take a lot at two things-- Detroit and MySpace.

**You have no idea
what you want,
so shut up**

Mid-century, Detroit could do no wrong. They had a lock on the manufacturing of cars. You wanted an American car not only because they rocked, but they were well made. Detroit listened to its customers. They gave them the cars they wanted and the public responded by buying them. Then some bean counter found a way to shave off a couple bucks off the bottom line by sacrificing quality. They got some designers on



board and started making shit with four wheels. Consumers complained. Detroit said, "HEY! We're Detroit. You're gonna buy what we produce and stop whining. You have no idea what you want, so shut up."

A decade later, foreign car mystically appeared on America's highways. And Detroit started taking a dirt nap. The American monopoly on cars shattered when consumers walked away from Detroit's abusiveness. Even today, Detroit still doesn't quite get it. They continue to manufacture cars well

behind the curve of what Americans want. They put all their eggs in the backseat of their SUV and drove it into a telephone pole.

Second Life is not a social networking app

As for MySpace... well... HAHAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! They lost. I can't remember the last time I logged onto MySpace. I may not even remember my password. In the interest of brevity-- let's just leave it at "they lost".

And here we are at Linden Labs. A lovely little virtual world may well get destroyed in the quest to turn a profit rather than continuing to push the boundaries of what a virtual world can do.

And let's be clear – while the Lindens do the coding, it's what you and I do with the code that makes Second Life what it is. And SL is not a social networking app. SL is a community. Perhaps a pretty dysfunctional community (how many people on your list actually

hello to you?) but in the aggregate, we all work together for each other's benefit. If you want to watch David After Dentist****, Second Life is not the place to do it. That's not the point of SL. And for the Lindens to want to flood the grid with memes that do nothing but waste bandwidth, implies greed, ignorance of what we want. Or both.

The RL economy no longer runs on concrete product. Yes, we still make things for people to buy, but it's not the point



anymore. The point is consumer data. And that's a thorny issue. The Web* is free simply because you make a devil's bargain-- I will give you every single piece of personal data about myself so I can watch "David After Dentist" for the 3,252nd time. Take away the monetary incentive for YouTube to allow someone to see Hitler Responds to Keyboard Kat (which I would assume would bring up contextual ads for ovens) and you have to pay for it. And we know what happens when the monthly rumor about paying for [*your favorite site here*] makes the rounds-- revolution... or the threat of it, at least.

The urge to become whores

A final word. My RL wife just got a new job. She worked for a non-profit mental health policy center making about 25% less than what her new corporate job will pay. She stayed at the center for love and commitment to the goals of the organization. The work she did was important, somewhat obscure and wonkish. The idea was not to make money but to do work that was important to the greater good of the whole. Money was not the sole reason for her leaving, but it played a part in it. She could

have stayed and tried to move the center from a non-profit to a for-profit, and increasing her chances of a larger salary. But that's not what the center is. Making the jump to for-profit would destroy a lot of good work. So instead, *she* moved, to a for-profit company. Metaphorically, she went from SL to IMVU.

The Lindens need to remember the words of Voltaire: "Writing is like prostitution. First you do it for love. Then you do it for friends. Then you do it for money."

Let's hope the Lindens can resist the urge to

become whores, and just stay sluts.

Rodolpho Teardrop is a writer, DJ and RL comic. The editor welcomes your comments about Rodo's point of view.

Annotations

*A quick explanation if you need it. "The Web" is a small part of "The Internet". "The Internet" encompasses a whole range of services and protocols from email to file sharing and, yes, Second Life. To say "The Internet" when you mean "The Web" is like telling someone you went out for "food" and expecting them to understand you had a hamburger.

** Can't figure it out? Try user@yahoo.com.

*** Here's a tech support quandary/Zen Koan for you: Why is the first thing the "computer illiterate" say when you ask them to type something is "Is that that case-sensitive?"

**** Hint: it involved surreptitious collection of user data.

*****Viral YouTube cute kid video,



Cat Questionnaire:

Gracie Kendal

Cat Boccaccio: Interrogator

This month, Gracie Kendal dares to respond.

SL age: 5 years

SL activity: Artist

RL location: Los Angeles, California

In-your-own-words bio: I'm a Los Angeles based new media and performance artist, painter and art historian. For over 12 years, I've been experimenting with various interdisciplinary art forms including using online virtual worlds and social networking technologies to connect with international audiences and local arts communities. My current work explores notions of online identity, specifically the construction of Avatars. Two projects I'm presently working on include, "My Life as an Avatar: The Gracie Kendal project" and "1000 Avatars" a contemporary anthropology of portraits of avatars in the virtual world of Second Life.

1. What in SL has brought you the most happiness?

Dating

2. What has given you the most sadness?

Dating



3. How would you describe your home in SL?

My home is a spacious wood and stone house created by J Jameson. It is full of art I have collected in Second Life and set on a lovely wooded LGBT sim owned by some of my best SL friends.

4. Who in SL do you admire most?

I admire most every person in SL. Being a resident here you have to learn to be yourself, be brave and face this new world with an open mind. Most people take on that challenge with amazing grace. It is wonderful to watch these people grow and search for what they are looking for in life whether they realize it or not.

5. What character trait do you have in SL that is furthest from your RL personality?

Hmmm... that is a hard one. Gracie is pretty much me from RL. She may be a little less shy maybe but she is me. She even shies away from being silly, which I am trying to get over in both RL and SL. That is what I am in search of. :)

6. Which character trait did you leave behind in RL?

I would have to say my low self esteem. Gracie definitely has much more self esteem and self confidence than I do. She doesn't have to hide behind a skin that she is ashamed of or not comfortable in.

7. What is your weakness when it comes to spending your Linden dollars?

Art for sure. But also tips when I go to events. (It sure isn't clothes considering I haven't changed in a couple years. LOL)

8. What is your favorite place in Second Life, and why?

I'd have to say my 1000 Avatars installation because when I am there I am always surrounded by the beauty in SL in the diversity of the avatars that people have created here. Also because people just drop in at any time and it's always so great to meet new people.

9. What scares you the most in (or about) Second Life?

Being alone and lonely.

10. What is your secret pleasure in SL?

Sex?? Ok, sex. LOL

11. What would it take to drive you out of Second Life?

Linden Labs closing Second Life down. That would be tragic, but that is the only thing. Gracie will always be here as long as Second Life remains.

12. What one word would you use to describe the art community in SL?

Diverse

13. What are you most proud of in SL?

The friendships I have made and the people I have met.

14. If you built a sim from scratch with unlimited resources, what would it be called?

Graceland? Haha, just kidding. I have no idea. It would probably be centered around Alice in Wonderland and would be a whole installation of huge mushrooms, tall flowers, bright colors and lots and lots of fun interactive art. But I have no idea what I'd name it!



Visit Gracie's 1000+ Avatars installation:

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Coyote/81/163/1430>

Her SL art studio at Artropolis:

<http://slurl.com/secondlife//127/46/24>

And on the Internet:

<http://graciekendal.wordpress.com/>

<http://1000avatars.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.kristineschomaker.net/>



The Girl Opines

Of Men and Meeroos: The Urge to Merge

Jullianna Juliesse: !!!!!!!

So, can someone please tell me what the hell a Meeroo is?

And why I would want one? Cute in an annoying, cloying way and sickeningly wide-eyed, these fluffy, Disneyesque creatures come in all shapes, colors, and sizes. And among certain circles, they receive cultish devotion. It seems they are everywhere, and like Hannah Montana, they've even inspired their own tacky fashion line. I recently spent a morning knee-deep in a meadow of Meeroos to ponder their existence, and the implications thereof.

Like real-life creatures, their creators (some unseen, script-writing deities) have imbued each one with a genetic "code" of sorts, which then allows the owner to breed and create new little Meeroos. Perusing an instructional diagram on Mendelian genetics posted in said meadow, I was reminded of the fruit-fly lesson from high school biology many years ago: "The phenotypes of two independent traits show a 9:3:3:1 ratio in the F2 generation." Breeders can control any

of the variables programmed into the equation—size, eye color, color of coat—with scientific precision. Unlike the real world, where acts of nature pretty much take over in matters of reproduction, these breeders have god-like control over the end product.

I've also followed, with a certain prurient fascination, the horse-breeding cult. This is a pretty active bunch as well. One need only scan the daily listing of events to figure this out. Like bad infomercials, one can find a horse auction going on someplace in Second Life pretty much any time of the day or night. Ranches have sprung up all over the grid, along with a subsequent fashion trend toward Western wear and cheesy blues clubs. These folks mean business!

And then there is the ultimate act of breeding and procreation that takes place here in Second Life: the folks who become virtually pregnant and give "birth" here in-world. I was tempted to do some on-the-ground research and see how this whole thing actually works; however, modesty, decorum, and common sense fortunately prevailed. I did quickly scan the Knowledge Base forums and learned that the 9-month gestation period is condensed into a 9-week time-frame, and that some sort of talking belly HUD is involved.

The HUD allows the mother-to-be to get pregnant on the first try (imagine how appealing this must be to someone struggling with infertility in real life), but it is incumbent on the expectant mother to modify her own shape, getting larger and larger as the "pregnancy" progresses. (What about those people who have "no modify" shapes? Are they essentially infertile? What happens if a man wears the HUD?) And again, a whole cottage industry of fashion seems to have



sprung up around the gestating set, and rumor has it that there is blossoming demand for midwives that specialize in roleplay births.

So, what gives? What is at the root of all this procreation?

Different people come at it for different reasons, I suspect. There is certainly an element of control underpinning what I call “the urge to merge” here in Second Life. Our real lives are often so arbitrary, so difficult to wrestle into any sense of order, that clearly the temptation to generate the so-called “perfect” outcome through

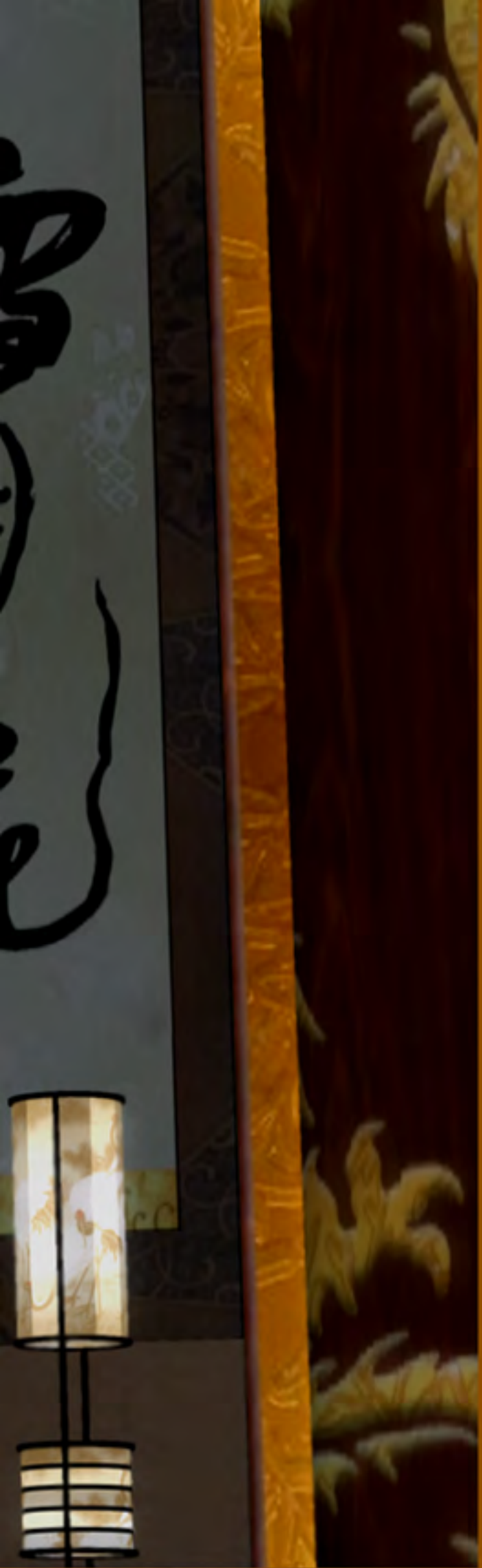
breeding could become very real for some. For others, breeding—whether Meeroo, horse, or child—is an expression of the need to commit oneself to something, to care for it, to fill some sort of lonely void. And like the real world, these basic human needs are capitalized upon by those seeking to turn a quick buck, which became readily apparent to this girl while researching this piece.

And so I close, dear reader, wandering off to a nearby sim to have a pixel prescription for contraception filled. But I will make one last confession: When I moved to my beach home, one of the first things I did was buy an orange and white cat at Zooby's. Damn it all, I always wanted an orange and white kitty!

Photograph by Jami Mills



Jami Mills



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Plan B

I, Immersionist

Deningun Parte: Editor

I admit to being a profile snob.

I go into crowds at dances, gallery openings, even at social get-togethers and peek. It's perfectly normal behavior in Second Life, and most everyone does it. I am picky though. I look at "first life" or "additional information" tabs with a particularly critical eye. Why?

If someone puts up their RL picture, and says their avatar is just the same as they are in RL, I am likely to keep my distance. If someone says their RL is private, I perk up. I find people's attitudes towards RL very indicative of their SL behavior. Those who create avatars in their own image may say they are true to themselves. Never mind that they lose their wrinkles and a few pounds. They otherwise live with the same limitations as they have in RL. But if I want to meet real people, all I have to do is get up and stroll down to the coffee shop. There are lots of them there, and the menu is better than SL will ever have.

Ah, but for those who cut loose and leave RL be! They come in strange shapes: I have encountered at least four genders in Second Life (yes, four: female, shemale, hermaphrodite, and male, and I probably missed others), several races, and I have discussed the effects of bereavement with a very well-spoken and very large wolf. They may not be true to their RL, but with their imagination and the courage to live it, I feel they offer a window into their soul. Who is to say they are not true to themselves? It is this imaginative streak that keeps me in SL, that gives me the motivation to push my own boundaries, to go wherever my imagination will take me.


But living in Second Life, in developing deep and lasting friendships with people who follow their own dreams, I also find this: most of us are somehow “damaged goods” in RL. Quite literally everyone I’ve gotten to know well has some very significant challenge or handicap in RL. I know of mental illness, child abuse, rape, gender dysphoria, physical disability. My SL friends die at an alarming rate (and I refer to RL death here), and often at a relatively young age, very unlike people in my RL.

And so, I wonder what really keeps people here, what really makes us climb the steep learning curve that Second Life has. To me, and to many, many others, this virtual world is much more than a game. It is the great social laboratory where we can dare to do the nearly unthinkable; the bold, daring things we would shy away from in RL, where we can have the experience RL denies us. And just as I hear the stories of RL hardship, I hear the stories of how the experiment makes a difference in people's lives. The anonymity here lets you experience what life would be like if you were, say, courageous, optimistic, or of the opposite gender; if you were active and outgoing

rather than passive. And the experience changes people's RL. I've heard it time and again, and I will attest to it myself as well.

I am no market researcher; I am biased toward “immersionists” like myself. I feel the hard-core of SL users falls into this category. Because of that, I am ever so bemused by attempts of Linden Lab to develop Second Life to be more palatable to those who are least invested here. I wonder if that is wise, but I do not panic. SL is my experiment with faith in the future. One way or another, I will have a virtual world to live in, and one way or another, this great experiment will go on. Eventually the market forces will see to that.





CAT BOCCACCIO
Second Life Photography

CAT'S BEACH GALLERY

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Zebrine%20Island/94/30/22>

Orchid



Jullianna Juliesse

I belong here—
I could have been cut,
displayed
in a crystal vase
on someone's inlaid entry
hall table,
A prize to be admired—
Preserved, watered
and dead in a week.
Your glass and iron
greenhouse,
It is safe—
My need,
It astounds us.
I curl, inward—
Sticky petals pulled tight
round
The center that is me.
Behind these damp windows

I am free, allowed
To be fragile, dependent,
Blushing in the indirect
light,
Triumphant in my
stubborn reserve.
You peel each
Layer away, one by one—
My roots relax,
stretching through the
damp, smooth soil.

I breathe easier now—
You will return tomorrow
to check on me.

I am that which I am
and nothing less.

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body




An exhibit of Second Life Photo
EAST Galleries <http://slurl.com>

image



photography by Cat Boccaccio
[/secondlife/Georgiana/225/141/87](#)



In Praise *of* Angry

I love angry women.

Their fury renews the world
creating the river delta or volcanic plain
where she, or I, or we can grow.

I admire strong women,
whose persistence
shapes our landscape
into deep chasms and peaceful valleys.

I adore experienced women
who watch, wait, and listen.
Patient as the turning of the globe,
their seasons give depth to life.

I love passionate women.
Their bright desire
shines yellow warmth
and illumines the space between us.

Women

I admire graceful women,
who gather within themselves
the blessings of the world, showering them
on the unworthy.

I adore intelligent women
who, as present as air,
question all and
create and recreate our world.

I desire a complete woman
Whose anger and strength embolden me.
Whose experience and passion delight me.
Whose grace and intelligence define my
world.

A poem by Karli Daviau

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